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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

17 November 1965

SPECIAL MEMORANDUM NO. 28-65

SUBJECT: A New Look at the Prospects for the African
Nationalist Movements in Angola and Mozambique*

SUMMARY

Portugal still faces no serious immediate threat. In Angola, rebel military operations are at a low ebb. Intermittent guerrilla activities began in Mozambique in September 1964, but they have not posed major military problems for Lisbon. In both cases, exile nationalist movements are divided and weak, and neither has yet been able to enlist a significant following throughout its territory. Both insurgencies probably will be sustained, but neither is likely to get out of hand at least during the next few years.

* For a fuller discussion of underlying factors, see SNIE 71-64, "Short-Term Prospects for the African Nationalist Movements in Angola and Mozambique," dated 1 July 1964. (~~SECRET~~)

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I. ANGOLA

A. The Current Situation

Military

1. African insurgency in Angola has decreased to a level which appears well within Portuguese ability to handle. Such military efforts as the nationalists have undertaken have continued to lose headway over the past eighteen months, and the now badly harassed guerrillas have been driven into a few almost inaccessible regions of northern Angola. Although the frequency of combat "incidents" varies widely from month to month, they are generally declining in number and intensity, and the area vulnerable to dissident operations has shrunk to no more than a third of what it was three or four years ago (see Map). Action by the Africans consists largely of small ambushes of patrols or attacks on isolated plantations or native villages for purposes of intimidation or, increasingly, for food. The Portuguese forces continue to take slight casualties, generally less than 10 killed per month, in their efforts to destroy rebel supply caches and hiding places and to cut remaining lines of communication to the Congo.

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2. Infiltration of arms and ammunition has almost ceased, and the Portuguese estimate that only about a quarter of the 4,000 guerrillas are armed with modern weapons. Kinkuzu training camp in the Congo (Leopoldville) which was maintained by the Government of the Republic of Angola in Exile (GRAE) seems no longer to be active; most of the arms and equipment which remained at the camp were brought into Angola last summer. Rebel desertions have increased. And the Portuguese have been able to release several thousand men from the Volunteer Defense Force. Moreover, substantial numbers of refugees are returning from camps in the Congo or from hiding in the Angolan bush to present themselves to Portuguese authorities. Finally, a high degree of economic recovery, particularly coffee production, is apparent in areas where the rebels once briefly held sway. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the nationalists have failed to develop new footholds for guerrilla action in the still tranquil areas of central and southern Angola.

Political

3. The rebel organizations back of the insurgency in Angola appear to be in even greater disarray than a year or so ago. Political skirmishing has continued within the nationalist

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organizations and among the exile nationalist leaders for power and for international recognition. The dissatisfaction of the rebel rank-and-file over setbacks in the field has focused on the GRAE politicians. Holden Roberto has found it difficult to maintain control of the GRAE against critics. In June 1965, a rival nationalist group, led by two of Roberto's key lieutenants who had earlier defected from the GRAE, attempted forcibly to take over Roberto's headquarters in Leopoldville, only to be foiled by the Congolese police. Roberto's dictatorial attitude and his favoritism for his Bakongo tribe have cost him the support of most of the comparatively small number of central and southern Angolan exiles in the nationalist movement.

4. Roberto has also suffered telling political setbacks abroad. President Kaunda refused his request for a base in Zambia, and financial support from his chief supporters, Nigeria and Tunisia, has slowed to a trickle. More important, however, was the decision by the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) Liberation Committee to afford a degree of recognition and money for the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the GRAE's only significant nationalist rival. Although most of these gestures were designed largely to display impatience

with Roberto personally and with his faulty administration of the GRAE, they have inevitably affected the prestige and morale of the nationalist movement as a whole.

5. The only military gain on the nationalist side for some time was registered by the smaller, Brazzaville-based MPLA which has established one or two small bases in the Cabinda exclave. But even this modest advance failed to stimulate support among the tribes in the surrounding area. Like the GRAE, the MPLA remains badly factionalized. It still lacks any significant military capabilities or forces in Angola proper, though it claims to have some 300 adherents undergoing military training in the USSR.

B. Prospects

6. In the Congo, Tshombe's ouster undoubtedly boosted hopes for better days both in the GRAE and the MPLA. We think it unlikely, however, that the nationalists will get much help from the Congo. President Kasavubu has long held serious reservations about Roberto personally, as well as about his Angolan military venture. Some of Roberto's supporters, e.g., Nendaka, Mobutu, perhaps Adoula, almost certainly will extend moral

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support, and probably provide small amounts of Congolese funds and material assistance, to his cause. But we think that Kasavubu will keep a fairly short rein on arms traffic through the Congo, and will also avoid Congolese commitments or substantial aid to the nationalist movement. Elsewhere, Kaunda has his hands full of problems arising out of the Southern Rhodesia question, and for some considerable time he is unlikely to permit the Angolans to establish a base in Zambia, particularly as he probably believes he must keep open the possibility of using the Benguela railroad through Angola if rail traffic through Rhodesia is cut off.

7. Nor is the OAU, despite its fiery resolutions, likely to provide greatly increased support for the beleaguered nationalists. The Accra meeting, for example, did no more than request Africans to facilitate movement of men and equipment for the "liberation" movements. There has also been renewed African pressures for a merger of the rival exile organizations. There is no reason to believe that these efforts will be any more successful than earlier OAU endeavors with competing Mozambique and Southern Rhodesian exile groups.

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8. In these circumstances, it will be very difficult for Roberto to avoid becoming the chief target of critics from all sides. The removal of Tshombe, who was Roberto's prime excuse for the GRAE's inability to work up steam, places the GRAE leader in an exposed position if he now fails to deliver. Although his hold on power will continue to be shaky, on the whole we consider it unlikely that Roberto will soon be abandoned either by the bulk of the Angolan rebels or by the independent African leaders. He retains a certain prestige as the most prominent figure among the nationalists, and the MPLA is unlikely to provide a sufficiently attractive or effective alternative to the GRAE. However, given his ineffective and unimaginative leadership, Roberto is unlikely to develop a greater following among the non-Bakongo tribes in Angola unless there is a drastic improvement in rebel military operations.

9. There is no evidence that the Communist powers are prepared to intervene in any decisive fashion. Their efforts to exploit the situation are greatly complicated by African rivalries and formidable problems of distance and logistics. Thus the nationalist cause probably will continue to stumble along, receiving just enough arms and funds to sustain sporadic

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guerrilla activity but mounting no real threat to Lisbon's domination for a considerable time to come.

II. MOZAMBIQUE

A. The Current Situation

Military

10. Nationalist forays from Tanzania and Malawi in September 1964 marked the outbreak of guerrilla violence in Mozambique. The main center of disaffection lies in the north-east plain, stronghold of the warlike Makonde tribe which straddles the Tanzanian border. The other area of significant dissidence is in the far northwest, reaching some 20-40 miles inland along Lake Nyasa, convenient to guerrilla thrusts from Tanzania both overland and by water (see Map). A new upsurge of guerrilla harassment last summer caused some concern among the Portuguese in Mozambique. However, Portuguese military operations were stepped up, and Lisbon's greatly superior forces seem now to have brought this rebel flurry under control. Indeed, it is important to note that the scope and intensity of insurgency are still very limited, e.g., Lisbon claims to have suffered

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only 26 killed in action between June and September. The nationalists can, however, roam about large stretches of sparsely settled countryside cutting roads, attacking native villages and small administrative or military posts, and conducting small-scale sabotage. But, even though small Portuguese detachments are subject to ambush, military convoys move freely through the infiltrated zones, and the roads are kept reasonably free of mines and attacks.

11. To be sure, the nationalists have improved their guerrilla capabilities and enhanced their prestige somewhat during the past year or so; Tanzania's decision in 1964 to provide operational bases and military training was a turning point in this respect. In particular, the guerrillas' newly developed ability to sustain modest operations within Mozambique has provided something of a psychological boost for them. But nationalist gains should not be overdrawn since they were to a considerable extent facilitated by Portuguese deficiencies. The Portuguese seem gradually to be surmounting many of these shortcomings, and to be improving their counter-guerrilla tactics, e.g., capitalizing on tribal rivalries, and overall military performance. Lisbon is giving

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greater attention to command problems, troop strength has been increased by 3,500 (up to 21,500), and construction of airfields and other military installations in northern Mozambique is being pushed. In these circumstances, despite some increase in violence, the guerrilla forces have enjoyed little success in enlarging the area of dissidence, i.e., instituting sabotage and terrorist activity in the more populous and economically important area of southern Mozambique, or enlisting much support from tribes other than the Makonde.

12. Moreover, the nationalist movement still suffers from grave organizational weaknesses and divisions. FRELIMO, led by Eduardo Mondlane, is still the predominant nationalist organization, though it suffers from periodic defections, resignations, or expulsions. However, Mondlane is a US-educated intellectual who has only a tenuous relationship with the Makondes, and it will be extremely difficult for him to build up dedication to a political cause among these largely primitive tribesmen, many of whom work or live in Tanzania or Kenya. In general, the rebels still seem capable only of frightening scattered and isolated settlements in the north, keeping the Portuguese military busy with patrolling, and

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inflicting minor casualties. Frelimo's claims that it will soon move its base into Mozambique appear unrealistic. It is perhaps more significant that Mondlane, never enthusiastic about starting hostilities, contends that the "war" may last for twenty years.

Political

13. Mondlane has doubts regarding his own future in Frelimo. Like Roberto, he continues to be regarded as a symbol of political unity, but he is not well known as a leader in the north where the fighting is centered, and opposition to him has grown among other Frelimo figures who consider themselves closer to Mozambique's tribal peoples. None of these individuals possess much personal prestige or following, however.

14. Mondlane continues to seek aid from West and East to maintain a balance. In practice he has received comparatively small amounts both from Communist states and the OAU's Liberation Committee. Meanwhile, Frelimo's rivals among the exile nationalist organizations lack the capacity to threaten its leadership either in terms of external support or political

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following.* In these circumstances, Mondlane seems likely to hang on to his job for some time, largely because he has established credentials as a nationalist in African and other circles abroad.

15. Whether through inertia or fear of Portuguese reprisals, most Mozambicans still appear to have little interest in the nationalist cause. The round-up of 200-300 leading members of the African community in Lourenco Marques earlier this year seems to have quashed potential opposition in the urban centers. Meanwhile, though the "war" is obviously costly for Lisbon (some 60,000 troops are presently stationed in Mozambique and Angola), it appears to have primed Mozambique's heretofore sluggish economy and most present trends indicate a strengthening and steady growth therein. Tourism, trade, and foreign investment have all registered increases in 1965.

B. Prospects

16. Despite the guerrilla outbreak and the improved capabilities and experience of the nationalists, we do not foresee

* Frelimo's most important rival at the moment is the Lusaka-based COREMO (Mozambique Revolutionary Council) recently formed through a merger of five small exile groups, which together have scant political or military assets.

a security situation arising which the Portuguese cannot handle for at least the next three to four years. The Portuguese cannot entirely stem the infiltration of men and supplies, and some African states and the Communists will continue to back the nationalists with training, arms, and cash. But the insurrection in the north probably can be contained, perhaps even reduced as in Angola, as the Portuguese bring more assets to bear. Of course, Lisbon's problems could be greatly complicated if the revolt in Angola should take on new life, or if a radical regime should come to power in Malawi. Even then, however, the nationalists would face a long, uphill struggle before they could effectively challenge Portugal's military or political position in Mozambique.

III. THE LONGER TERM

17. Over the much longer term, Portugal's prospects for holding on to Mozambique and Angola in the face of basic African trends remain unpromising. Meanwhile, however, Roberto, Mondlane, and most of the other nationalist leaders probably will resign themselves to the current state of affairs, striving to preserve their places while awaiting a decisive

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"break in the game," e.g., Salazar's death, or harsher US policies toward Portugal, which they believe would alter the situation swiftly and possibly propel them into power. During this period they will continue both to importune and to criticize the West, and the US will remain a principal target of nationalist fulminations.

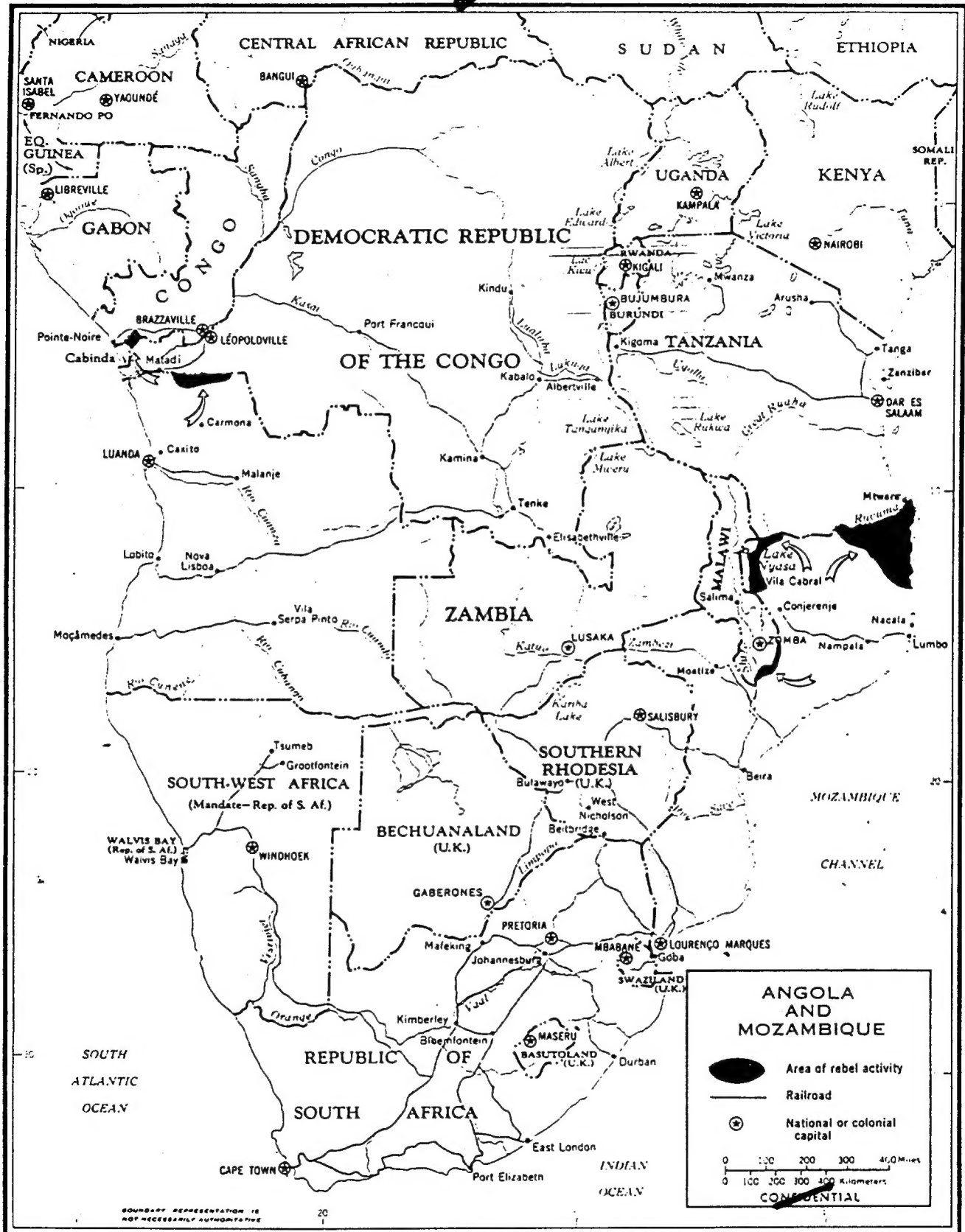
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